

A Message From the Chief Nurse

Nurses,

The month of April has quickly passed and showered us with many challenges and opportunities. Here are some updates to keep you informed.

Policy

The Memorandum of Understanding between HHS/OPHS and DOD has been signed that allows for approximately 200 officer assignments to DOD Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to provide clinical mental health services for a 36 month detail. If you are interested in any of these assignments or have any questions, contact CAPT O'Neal Walker in OCCO at Oneal.walker@hhs.gov.

Remember that the Required Wear of the PHS Uniform will take affect July 1. Take time to review and address your uniform needs.

Refer to http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/document/CCPM26_3_2.pdf if you have any questions.

Transformation

A One-Stop source of information on transformation activities and events is now available on the web. Visit <http://www.usphs.gov> and select *Active Duty PHS Officers* and then *Transformation*. This Web page will continue to expand and be updated on a periodic basic, so check back frequently to stay informed about issues related to the USPHS transformation.

Our nurse category is now 1403 officers strong, though we also continue to have many vacancies for both civilian, tribal hires and Corps nurses.

Keep up the good work with recruitment!

We are working to expand the types of certifications that receive incentive special pays and will explore the list of nursing certifications and approved certifying organizations adopted by Department of Defense (DOD). I will be working with the HHS Agency chief nurses for input.

Readiness and Preparedness

Nurses are still needed for 30 day deployments for Secretary Leavitt's Health Diplomacy Initiative.

- The *USS Boxer* will embark to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru (April 28-June 18)
- The *USS Kearsage* will sail to Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana (August 5-Dec 1)

- The *USNS Mercy* will proceed from Guam to the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Timor Leste, Australia, and Puapa New Guinea (May 22-Sept 1)

Check with your supervisor and agency liaison if you are able to participate in these important initiatives as a nurse practitioner or community health nurse.

The Basic Readiness status of the Commissioned Corps is at a new record of 88.1%. Great Job! Make sure to keep your readiness information updated on the OFRD website.

Career Development

OCCO Promotion Boards completed their work in April. Assimilation boards will convene in May. By law there is a limit of 2800 slots for regular Corps officers. There are usually about 200 officers assimilated each year given the retirement turnover.

We are working to refine our senior nurse counselor program and will select counselors to assist officers for the 2008-2009 term.

The Office of Minority Health offers an online continuing education program entitled *Culturally Competent Nursing Care: A Cornerstone of Caring*. It is designed to help nurses integrate cultural competency and awareness, knowledge, and skills to more effectively treat increasingly diverse patient populations. This is available at no cost at www.thinkculturalhealth.org/ccnm and is endorsed by the American Nurses Association and accredited for up to 9 contact hours through the American Nurses Credentialing Center. This is very helpful in supporting our priority to reduce health disparities.

The 2008 PHS Scientific and Training Symposium early bird registration deadline was extended. Visit the symposium website at <http://www.phscofevents.org/> for the complete conference agenda, registration and additional details. Register now. Grants are available to junior Officers and civilians.

The following video was done by the Association of Schools of Public Health to celebrate Public Health week:

<http://www.thisispublichealth.org>.

This is short reminder of how public health affects our daily lives.

Leadership and Outreach

The Acting Surgeon General continues his childhood overweight and obesity prevention outreach campaign. Information on this initiative is posted at www.surgeongeneral.gov. I invite you to share this information in any outreach you do to address this public health epidemic.

I will be speaking in Philadelphia to the nurse executives of the Volunteer Hospital Association beginning of May and will be attending the WHO Government Chief Nurse Forum in Geneva May 12-18.

Comment

Congratulations to all nurses who will be graduating this year with BSNs, masters and PhD degrees. We all benefit when you enhance your education and competencies. Continued life learning, in both formal and informal venues, gives us all the ability to stretch and grow personally and professionally. Embrace whatever opportunity you have to learn, to teach others and to improve our nation's health through the powerful weapon of knowledge.

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Chief Nurse Officer, US Public Health Service